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FIRST RECORD OF *PINCTADA RADIATA* (BIVALVIA, PTERIIDAE)  
EPIBIONT ON THE LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE  
*CARETTA CARETTA* (CHELONIA, CHELONIIDAE).

KEY WORDS: First record, Phoresy, Lessepsian, Mediterranean Sea

### **Abstract**

The first record of *Pinctada radiata* (LEACH, 1814) epibiont on the loggerhead sea turtle *Caretta caretta* (L., 1758) is pointed out, from the East coast of the Is. of Lampedusa. The implications for the spreading in the Mediterranean Sea of lessepsians are briefly considered.

### **Riassunto**

Sono stati osservati per la prima volta esemplari di *Pinctada radiata* (LEACH, 1814) epibionti su un esemplare ferito di *Caretta caretta* (L., 1758), raccolto nelle acque del versante orientale dell'isola di Lampedusa (AG). Questo ritrovamento evidenzia come il trasporto fortitico di lessepsiani può essere preso in considerazione, seppur in un numero limitato di casi, per la diffusione in Mediterraneo.

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On August 14th, 1991, a specimen of the loggerhead sea turtle, *Caretta caretta* (L., 1758), was found floating off the East coast of the Is. of Lampedusa (AG). The specimen showed a large injury on the middle of the carapace (Fig. 1), probably due to an impact with a screw, datable to two months about. An interesting epibiont community (mainly of Crustaceans) settled inside the relatively large cavity formed after the injury (GEROSA, in prep.). Besides Crustacea, Mollusca were represented by several specimens of *Pinctada radiata* (LEACH, 1814). The measures of three specimens (Figs. 2-4) asported from the cavity are listed below:

spm 1 lenght 18 mm	width 16.3 mm
spm 2 lenght 11.3 mm	width 11 mm
spm 3 lenght 4.5 mm	width 3.8 mm

*Pinctada radiata* was never found before, among the 'epizoic communities' living on marine turtles (FRAZIER et al., 1985; CAINE, 1986; DODD, 1988). This species is a lessepsian immigrant (BARASH and DANIN, 1973), presently colonizing the central Mediterranean basin with large banks in the Gulf of Gabes, and records from Malta, Pantelleria, Lampedusa (GHISOTTI, 1974).

Noteworthy, the species was already known in Mediterranean Sea (but after introduction by man) since from the last century (SAVIGNY, 1826; MONTEROSATO, 1878).

It can be assumed that settlement on the turtle was by larvae probably in the Mediterranean Sea (we can exclude settlement in Red Sea because of the scarce vagility of the loggerhead, due to the injury). Usually lessepsians' migration and spreading in the Mediterranean Sea are accounted to larval dispersal and, in a lesser part, to man. This record points out that introduction of specimens in Mediterranean Sea or, more easily, spreading in the basin, may be due in some cases (though very rarely) to phoresy: this phenomen should be taken into consideration especially for sessile species and for records actually far from the current range of the species, when larval dispersal could be unlikely given credit for it.

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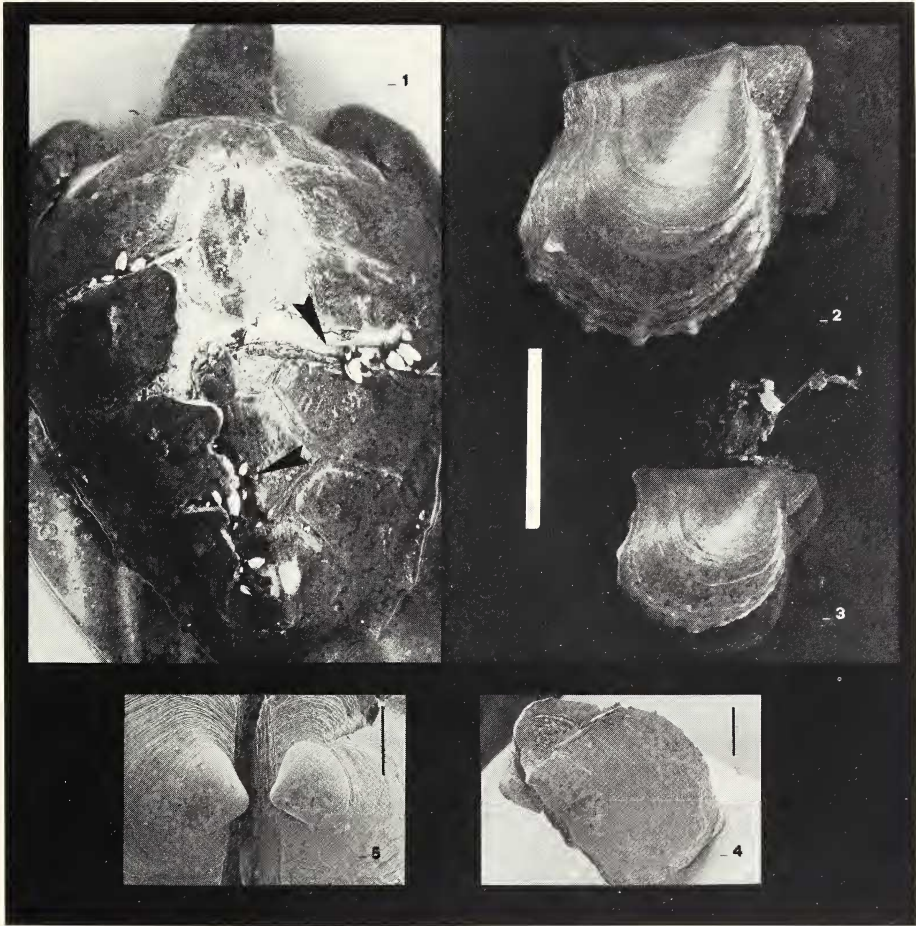


Fig. 1. The injured specimen of the loggerhead sea turtle *Caretta caretta*. Arrows indicate the localization of the specimens of *Pinctada radiata*

Fig. 2 - 5. *Pinctada radiata*. Light (2 and 3: line bar = 10 mm) and SEM (4: line bar 1 mm and 5: l.b. = 0.1 mm) photographs of the specimens found on the sea turtle

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